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Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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GANDHI AND MARX

VI

We are often told that you cannot go back upon the progress which man has made in the realms of general knowledge, science, industry, art, technology etc., and return to a past age. The advice is partly good, partly out of place, and to the extent it is good, it applies to non-material and intangible progress also.

By its very nature, the world is so made that you cannot return to the same place again. Seasons appear to return year after year; the sun, the moon and the planets seem associated with the same stars again and again. We do speak of their revolutionary cycles and even exactly declare where a particular heavenly body would apparently be at a particular moment. But the path of progress is of the nature of an extremely complicated endless spiral, wherein though the face turns in the same direction again and again, neither the looker nor the object looked at is ever in the same place. Therefore the apprehension that you might return to the "primitive or Middle Ages" of the past is as groundless as the desire to return to the "golden age" of the past is futile. A higher civilization, i. e. a particular society of human beings, might decay and degenerate, and be overrun and destroyed by one, which is still low, but mankind will never return to its own past.

Secondly, if one cannot consent to go back in the realm of material sciences, can one do so in the sphere of spiritual and moral development of the human race? Can we disregard the progress made by man, age after age, in the spiritual, moral, intellectual and mental spheres, which made it possible for humanity to produce men like Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, Gandhi and others who stand like lighthouses to others for centuries, and who in their own selves show a point higher than the one preceding?

Winwood Reade, an atheist in the ordinary sense, but a great humanitarian, says in his book *The Martyrdom of Man*:

> "The desire to do good which arose in necessity, which was developed by the hopes of a heavenly reward, is now an instinct of the human race ....There will always be enthusiasts for virtue as there are now, men who adorn and purify their souls before the mirror of their conscience, and who strive to attain an ideal excellence in their actions and their thoughts."

Identifying himself with this class, he thus expounds the form of his 'Virtue-religion' and the discipline for attaining it:

> "To develop to the utmost our genius and our love, that is the only true religion. To do that which deserves to be written, to write that which deserves to be read, to tend the sick to comfort the sorrowful, to animate the weary, to keep the temple of the body pure, to cherish the divinity within us, to be faithful to the intellect, to educate those powers which have been entrusted to our charge and to employ them in the service of humanity, that is all that we can do. Our religion therefore is Virtue, our Hope is placed in the happiness of our posterity; our Faith is the Perfectibility of Man. Love, not Fear, will unite the human race........With one faith, with one desire, they will labour together in the Sacred Cause — the extinction of disease, the extinction of sin, the perfection of genius, the perfection of love, the invention of immortality, the exploration of the infinite, the conquest of creation.
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> "All men cannot be poets, inventors, or philanthropists; but all men can join in the gigantic and Godlike work of the progress of creation. Whoever improves his own nature, improves the universe of which he is a part. He who strives to subdue his evil passions, vile remnants of the old four-footed life and who cultivates the social affections; he who endeavours to better his conditions and to make his children wiser and happier than himself; whatever may be his motives, he will not have lived in vain ....But this condition is not to be easily attained;........Virtue in its purest and most exalted form can only be acquired by means of severe and long continued culture of the mind."

Man has often appeared to have gone forward and backward in the course of his evolution. He has also often erred, and has had to count over and over again. He has often tried to undo what had been done once deliberately and to restore the *status quo* as nearly as possible. For instance, in the realm of political institutions he has not settled down to any one form as yet. Absolute monarchy (dictatorship), limited or constitutional monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, republican State, unitary government, federal government are forms which have been tried in a variety of shades again and again, and may again be tried in the future. The historian does not look into the apparent forms of these governments and the temporary advances and set-backs in them, but examines the state of political thought behind every such experiment, and the extent of humanity influenced by it. It is on this that he assesses the civilization of that period.

Marx examined the political institutions of the world from the point of view of their effect on the economic status and freedom of man, and came to the conclusion that with the passage of time political power will progressively pass into the hands of the industrial workers. They will be the most privileged class of people in the State. Hence, he concludes, it is the duty of discerning men to help that transformation.

This might be true. But this does not mean that it is the whole truth, and even if it be so, it may be brought about by any means whatsoever. The spiritual and moral progress made by man during all these centuries must also be borne in mind in achieving the end. And this progress should be properly assessed. If Gandhiji showed the climax of moral perfection of the present age, the next great man of the world will have to show a still higher stage of perfection. If determinism has any value, this may be taken as the next destined goal of humanity, and if it be true, as the Marxist believes, that an individual man is nothing more than a small bee working itself out, even unto death, for the perfection of the beehive and its queen, he must so work that it may be possible for humanity to produce a man greater than Gandhi at the next stage, and within a shorter period than humanity has taken hitherto. It must be remembered that only thousands of individual strugglers for moral perfection could have made it possible for a Gandhi to be born ; tens of thousands of similar strugglers are necessary to produce *one still greater* than him. Hitler might have excelled all the great conquerors and despots of the past. Even super-Hitlers might reappear in the world. But they too are born as a result of thousands of smaller adventurers of the same type. But the development of this feature cannot be the right goal of humanity.

The moral goal is as important and inevitable as the economic and political goal. Rather, if a choice has to be made between the two, the former must be regarded as the more important one. Any attempt to disregard it will fail to bring about the attainment of even the material goal. It will either be not achieved at all or even if seemingly achieved will bring no peace and prosperity to the people on whose behalf it is attempted. We see with our own eyes, how the neglect of the moral emphasis of Gandhiji is responsible for absence of peace and prosperity in our country in spite of independence. It will be the same after the establishment of Communism.

It is also a partial truth to say that it is wrong to give up a line of progress once traversed. Progress is not synonymous with breaking a past record irrespective of its moral value and utility. Such a theory can lead us only to the ever-increasing perfection of destructive weapons and demons in human form. The next war would have to be more extensive, total and terrible and to be directed by more inhuman generals than the last one. Progress would consist in destroying a larger part of humanity than hitherto.

Indeed there do exist people who believe so ; nor is it impossible that the appearance of such events and monsters might occur in the future. But it will be progress not towards further development but towards decay and destruction of civilization and mankind. If a conscious effort is to be made, it should be to prevent it, never to hasten it.

14-3-'50 K. G. MASHRUWALA

(To be continued)

ARBITRATION IN POLITICS

Non-violence is one of the fundamental bases of human life which finds its expression in various forms in relation to various fields. In politics it is expressed in its emphasis on mutual consultations in search of common points and through them in hammering out a solution whereby the parties concerned can pursue their own course without coming in conflict with the rest. In economics, the non-violent approach is distinguished by an endeavour to protect all legitimate interests. This is, in modern parlance, called negotiation.

Failing to come to an agreement in both the above cases, the issue is referred to arbitration. If arbitration is not agreed to, *Satyagraha* is resorted to, which again is a militant expression of non-violence. Thus negotiation is a pre-arbitration step and arbitration, a pre-*Satyagraha* step, all three, designed to dilute opposition.

Gandhiji started the great experiment of non-violence in South Africa. The then question, which was before him, was, how to liquidate dispute between the Indians and the Whites. Negotiations were tried, but they failed. Arbitration postulates the recognition of equality of the two parties. The strength of the Indian community there could be established only by their readiness to suffer in vindication of their self-respect, i. e. by *Satyagraha*. Thus where there is either no scope or no possibility of arbitration, *Satyagraha* is resorted to. Normally as is said above arbitration must precede *Satyagraha*.

As was Gandhiji's wont, he started the experiment of arbitration in his own life. He settled the case of Dada Abdulla v. Tyeb Sheth by arbitration. He writes in his *Autobiography* :

> " My joy was boundless. I had learnt true practice of law. I had learnt to find out the better side of human nature and to enter men's hearts. I realized that the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties

riven asunder. The lesson was so indelibly burnt into me that a large part of my time during 20 years of my practice as a lawyer was occupied in bringing about private compromises of hundreds of cases. I lost nothing thereby — not even money, certainly not my soul." (p. 168).

As days went on and he returned home to try the efficacy of his new-found weapon, this valuable lesson assumed colossal proportions as did his personality and work. In all the disputes he began to examine for settlement the possibilities of arbitration. "Quarrels must be made impossible," he asserts in *Communal Unity* (p. 49), "by making arbitration popular and obligatory." He refers to arbitration as a civilized method: "If we cannot, after the manner of civilized man, resort to arbitration, we shall perish............We must learn to settle all our differences, whether religious or others by arbitration." (*ibid*, pp. 142-43).

The communal tension proved the most baffling problem in his life which at one time threatened him even to doubt the efficacy of a lifetime principle. But he would not lose hope. While writing of Pakistan he wrote:

> "My hope is that some day or other all parties will come to their senses and not insist on their demands being accepted and consent to go to arbitration. It is an age-long method and a civilized method and I hope, it will be accepted." (*Harijan*, 24-5-1942).

Regarding the settlement of the Junagadh question also he suggested that the 'only honourable way out was the ancient method of arbitration in the usual manner.' (*Delhi Diary*, p. 163).

In 1942 the Indo-British question developed into a crisis during war. But Gandhiji's love for peace was too genuine to melt away before the conservative obduracy of the then rulers. He made a sporting offer to the other party in reply to a foreign correspondent. He asserted:

> "Any day, I would advocate arbitration for the Indo-British problem. I suggested long ago that this question could be decided by arbitration." (*Harijan*, 24-5-'42).

Is it not interesting to speculate at this stage whether the Britishers would not have fared better, had they accepted his offer?

In response to an anxious wire from London before the declaration of the last European war, Gandhiji writes:

> "How I wish Herr Hitler would respond to the appeal of the President of the United States and allow his claim to be investigated by arbitrators in whose choice he will have as effective a voice as the disputants." (*Harijan*, 2-9-1939).

But politicians are not known to learn wisdom in time. They can do so only partially when they succeed in bringing utter ruination of their people. In all the cases, cited above, therefore, Gandhiji's sage advice of arbitration was not heeded with what lamentable results we already know!

R. J. SOMAN

AS AN AMERICAN SAW US

India is far away from us in customs and taboos, near though it is in time (thirty-four actual flight hours). It is a land of great contrasts in climate, races, languages, religions, and types of government. To us the greatest contrast was the extreme poverty of the masses and the comfortable, even luxurious standards of living of the upper classes. As an example, we found people sleeping in the streets and on the steps of the great Mosque of Delhi because they had no place to go; we were lavishly entertained in the Viceroy's sumptuous place in New Delhi and were given a banquet by a wealthy industrialist, where we were served various wines and champagnes. Delegates to the (Science) Congress came in contact primarily with the university people and with the governing classes both Indian and English.

In the Science Congress we found the meetings of various scientific sessions much like those of our own American Association for the advancement of Science.

The discussions were keen, and the criticisms of the papers were searching. We were all impressed, I believe, with the knowledge, the Indians had of foreign literature, and I had an experience similar to others in finding that my own work was well known to the specialists in my particular field.

* * *

The greatest fault I could find with Indian scientists was a certain disinclination to use their hands. This fault I have also found among some other foreign scientists. The lack of appreciation of the dignity of manual labour, as well as caste system — which now appears to be in process of gradual elimination — is a great handicap to their technological advancement. Perhaps as valuable a thing as any that I told Indian scientists with whom I had conversation was that I helped my wife wipe the dishes in our own household.

* * *

One of the American vice-consuls in India told me that the difference between Indians and Americans could be demonstrated by the fact that, when an American gets a Ph.D. degree, that is the start of his going to work more intensively, but when an Indian gets a Ph. D. that is likely to be the end of his work — he feels he has reached his goal.

ALBERT F. BLAKESLEE

(From *Science and Culture*, Aug. '49)

Correction

In *Harijan* of March 5, 1950 (XIV-I), page 15, column 2, paragraph 2, line 5 for *bears* read *hears*.

HARIJAN

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FOR ALL-INDIA UNITY

Among persons possessed of authority, perhaps there is no greater champion than Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru of people who, because of their lack of numbers, knowledge, poverty, or organization, are exploited or oppressed by the strong in any part of the world under the pretext of conquest, race, religion, civilization etc. His interest in international politics is due to his burning passion for raising the status of the huge mass of down-trodden humanity in every part of the globe. His sympathy knows no narrow boundaries of race, colour, religion or place of residence. Whether it is the minorities and the poverty stricken Harijans and Adivasis of Bharat and Pakistan, or whether it is the coloured people of Africa, the negroes of America, and the awakened masses of the Middle East and South East Asia, Pandit Jawaharlal will be found to stand always on the side of the weak. He refuses to join any bloc because he is always with the bloc of the weak and the oppressed. He cannot brook mean, selfish, cruel and arrogant treatment of the weak by the strong anywhere. We perceive how immensely anxious he feels at present about the Hindus of Pakistan. It is not because he is a Hindu in common with them. He would feel the same if, for instance, the Hindus and Muslims of Pakistan combined to harass, say, the Adivasis or Christians of that region, or if the Hindus ill-treated the Muslims or any other minority in Bharat.

As he said at the World Pacifist Meeting at Sevagram, he is not a Pacifist in the usual sense of that term. That is, to say, if he saw an evil deed being perpetrated in his presence, he would not hesitate to use his physical strength or fire his gun (if he carried one) to prevent it even to the extent of killing the perpetrator. That would be the immediate reaction of the situation upon his nerves. But this does not mean that he believes in the philosophy of violence as such and seeks the resolution of disputes through violence.

He is deeply agitated over the condition of the minorities in Pakistan and seeks a solution to that problem. It is his present mission. Like Bharat, Pakistan will have to realize and accept that both the sub-countries will have to be secular in their constitutional and political character; they cannot but be inhabited by people of different religions, and they must all enjoy an equal status; both must be pledged to maintain a State, in which the religion of the citizen will not be regarded as either a recommendation or a disqualification for him. All minorities must be absolutely safe in both the parts of all-India.

The duty of the people of India at this juncture is to give Pandit Nehru their fullest support and co-operation in this great work. His policy and instructions should be strictly and faithfully followed. No obstructions and difficulties should be created in his way. Nothing should be done inside India which would add to his anxiety about communal peace or compel him to hang down his head with shame for our acts. If we are really keen on making the minorities in Pakistan free from danger, we must strengthen his hands in every way.

The most important thing in this respect is that the Hindus of India must put our own minorities altogether out of fear. Nowhere should Muslims be harassed, ill-treated or high-handedly dealt with. A coward is often apt secretly to do what a hot-headed person is found to do openly. One must have known how a gentle looking imp keeps a pin under a spirited boy's seat, and the latter on getting the prick loses his temper and strikes the other a blow. The blow is perceived by the teacher or elder, who ignorantly takes it to be an act of wanton aggression on the boy's part and punishes him for it. The silent mischief of the imp is not known. Similarly, we Hindus often exploit our reputation for gentleness, meekness and piety and instigate ill-treatment of some stray and poor Muslims and when they express their resentment by a riotous disturbance, they are proclaimed as bullies and breakers of peace. We must remember that the person who starts mischief in however minute a form is most responsible for the disturbance. Hindus in India must pledge not to initiate mischief under any circumstances. It is not for the people to punish Muslim suspects or to avenge crimes perpetrated by them. It is for the authorities to do it. If there is information against any person, the authorities might be apprised of it. To punish innocent residents for the alleged deeds of others is wanton and cowardly brutality.

Some of our papers have been carrying on a scurrilous propaganda against Indian Muslims; we are asked to look upon them all as fifth-columnists and to distrust their expressions of loyalty to India; we are also told that all the Hindus in Pakistan must be brought to India and all the Muslims removed there; that Indian Muslims must be treated as hostages for the safety of Hindus in Pakistan. There is also a propaganda in favour of immediate declaration of war against Pakistan, for turning into a temple every mosque, against which there is evidence that it was so at one time in the past. The great enthusiasm displayed for the restoration of the Somnath temple is partly due to the opportunity it affords of giving vent to the anti-Muslim feelings in the heart. Even non-idol worshipper Arya Samajists have been feeling interested in the restoration of that temple.

These are all irresponsible activities: They will disrupt the country. Hate cannot create a nation; it can create a temporary combination for mutual destruction, but never strengthen it and unify it. Even if we had the good of the

Hindus alone at heart, the cult of hatred must be abandoned.

That even in the midst of these heart-rending accounts, we hear also of instances in both the sub-countries of Hindus protecting the Muslims and Muslims protecting the Hindus at great risk to themselves, is a sign of hope and consolation. It shows that humanity has not left man altogether, and that no religious sect has the monopoly of possessing humane sentiments. It is such people who will raise the status of their religion and build up a nation. The votaries of hate will but end in destroying one another as also their religion along with several innocent lives. The way to all-India Unity will open itself when non-fanatic men of religion are awakened in an active manner.

13-3-'50 K. G. MASHRUWALA

MISCHIEVOUS FABRICATIONS

[In one of his statements the Prime Minister of Pakistan attributed the happenings in Calcutta on 13th February last to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's speech in the Calcutta Maidan a few days earlier, and accused him of having been party to a "master plan for the loot, arson and murder of Muslims in Calcutta". The following is the concluding part of the statement which Sardar Patel issued on 12th March in reply to the false allegations of the Pakistan Government and Press. — K. G. M.]

It is clear that instead of feeling ashamed of what has happened in East Bengal, the Central and Provincial Governments in Pakistan are engineering excuses by tracing an imaginary origin of those atrocities.

I need not say anything in defence of my Calcutta speech. It is there for any one to read and form his own conclusions. That unashamed fabrication has been resorted to is clear from the following supposed quotation from my speech given by the *Dawn's* Calcutta correspondent: "Bombs should not fall on your own policemen. They are the guardians of the freedom you have achieved with the blood of your men, women and children in Noakhali. Do not forget Noakhali. Do not forget that important limbs of your Mother India have been cut. Do not forget that your goal is not yet achieved and finally do not forget that you and your police have to fight with someone else." Compare that with what was actually said. The only reference to Noakhali was when I traced historically the pangs and sorrows which Bengal had suffered. The reference to the police came when I was dealing with the menace of communists and other anti-social elements. I quote the actual words I used which are representative of the burden of that part of my speech: "We have got used to calling the police bad names in the past. We have to change that mentality. The police which we maligned was different from the police which is serving you today. They are volunteers; they are bearing the burden of a great responsibility. You should have respect and sympathy for these guardians of law and order. If you do not, you will regret it." I need hardly comment on the manufacturing efficiency of the *Dawn* further. The Pakistan Prime Minister was more clever in his own way. He took sentences out of the context and pieced them together to make a plausible story, and went on to add "our information is that what he actually said was even more poisonous than the quotations that I have given you, and they were kept out of the Press." I can only reciprocate the compliment which Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan paid me earlier and say that he must have been "singularly ill-informed." Perhaps one of the 'more poisonous quotations' to which he refers is the following which both he and the source of his inspiration alike have significantly omitted: "Anger or hate will not avail you. Our brothers, both Hindus and Muslims, have been separated from us. All of us do wish that people on both sides of the frontier should prosper. But for that both sides must be patient, brave and prudent."

WHAT WILL THEY DO AT ANGUL?

The *Principles of Sarvodaya Plan* has got a mixed reception. Some find in it a tendency towards primitivism. They fear that its desire to turn the principle of self-sufficiency into a dogma may put back the hands of the clock of progress by many centuries. Some hold that the plan is so realistic that it can easily form the basis of future planning and its main features can be integrated in a more comprehensive pattern that the Government of India might ultimately weave. And then there are some who have challenged the planners in good faith to live up to the principles they have embodied in it. For they say, if the World could be saved by schemes and theoretical plans to bring about Utopia, we have them in abundance. What is wanted is the faith and power to achieve these ideals. Therefore they say, what we want most today, are not schemes or plans but more Gandhis.

There are personalities so powerful and self-willed, who for themselves need no organized social effort to fulfil their mission and to whom any kind of organization and government rather than being a help is a hindrance. They even do not think of the morrow. But the lot of the ordinary man is otherwise. Unless he becomes conscious and plans his life, it becomes a drift: a ship on the waters carried away by the wind or a cloud in the sky rent asunder. He has to share his life with his neighbours both for happiness as well as wisdom; if he does so with a consciousness and a plan he will be doubly rewarded.

Men like Gandhiji are born once in an age, but he has left behind him men who believe in his principles and way of life. They can on their own implement the Sarvodaya Plan in their individual lives. The basic idea is a non-violent approach to individual and social life and non-violence is the quality of the soul which does not depend for its manifestation on anybody else. This non-violence is, moreover, to be expressed in service and results in non-exploitation

of man by man. Gandhiji has shown the way through his constructive programme how even a single individual can try to lead a non-violent and non-exploiting life. All-embracing constructive work makes a worker's life intensely social, because it requires a close association of the people and evokes the energy of all its units.

The constructive workers who assembled in a conference twice in Wardha had before them not merely individuals or groups but the whole nation. They requested the president to appoint a committee whose main task would be to create public opinion in favour of the plan and to see that the plan is accepted by the Congress and implemented by the constructive organizations. The outcome of the deliberations of this committee is the Sarvodaya Plan.

The success of the *Sarvodaya* Plan, or as a matter of fact of any other plan, depends ultimately on its genuine acceptance by the people and their willing and active co-operation. The constructive workers will do this only through persuasion and education and their means will be the spoken or written word, service, and if and when necessary as the last resort *satyagraha*. It must also be remembered that there are items of the plan which can only be implemented by the State or governmental power.

The Constitution of the Indian Republic is democratic, based on adult franchise. Therefore, the most potent and powerful instrument of influencing, nay, making or unmaking the Government is the people. In the new era it is the people who are the ultimate depositories of power and source of all sanctions. Gandhiji's means of making the people conscious of their power and creating these sanctions was the manifold constructive activities. Workers must live with the people and serve them diligently and patiently. That is why Gandhiji in his last days advised the Congress to become an organization of workers who will operate and serve the voters in their own surroundings. The voters being the masters, many parties and persons will woo them. If the worker by his sincere and disinterested service has become the guide, friend and philosopher of the voter, he is sure to seek his guidance in his choice. If the worker has to discharge his functions properly in this matter, he or his organization must be conversant with political theory and its practice, of various political ideologies or isms, and of those political parties in the country who appeal to the people to put them in power so that they may serve them.

That need not and does not mean that the constructive workers should immediately enter the arena of political power or be drawn into power politics. Gandhiji wanted congressmen not to engage themselves in ungainly skirmish for power that was, in his opinion, the surest way of digging the grave of Congress. He wanted the constructive workers to guide and influence the voters. This was the way of wielding power without assuming authority.

The constructive worker should generate political power and without seizing it for himself influence it through his undisputed sway over the hearts of the people. To accomplish this the first indispensable requisite was to set his own house in order. Gandhiji said: "If all the *sanghs* give a good account of themselves, work unitedly and in co-operation without a jar or jolt it would be a grand thing." This means that the constructive workers should consolidate their strength and the way to do it was the unification and co-ordination of all the constructive organizations which were working for Gandhiji's principles and under his guidance: a Sarva Seva Sangh which will embrace and serve all activities of life including political. Only thus united they could play their revolutionary rôle, namely to influence political power to win economic, social and moral freedom. For Gandhiji life was one. It could not be divided into separate compartments. His philosophy is one synthetic whole and deals with all aspects of life. His search for truth led him to fiercest politics which he yet tried to spiritualize by his universal love or non-violence. He was the living link between the constructive workers and the country's premier political organization the Congress. He symbolized that unity and indivisibility of life in his own person which he preached constantly through word and action. He placed before the country his constructive programme not merely as a means for the rich to satisfy their philanthropic instinct through the channels of social relief but as a solution for the political and social problems of the people. In his hand the constructive programme was a revolutionary weapon capable of peacefully solving any problem of individual or national life. This aspect of the constructive programme really appealed to the people and gave it a unique dignity and status.

After freedom we are facing new problems. Our political problem today is not freedom but establishment of a secular State. The greatest danger to the secular nature of our infant State is today the strained relation between India and Pakistan and their adverse effects on the inter-communal life in both the States. Peace and goodwill between the two countries is essential for our smooth and rapid progress towards democracy. We want to build a society in which economic and social freedom is equally guaranteed to all. Both our political and economic problems need an immediate and a long-term solution. The constructive workers and their organizations have to bear their burden and responsibility in this behalf. To discharge this responsibility effectively, the constructive workers will not depend on the Government solely, nor will they shun it completely. The modern state so informs every activity and institution of the people and controls their lives that without

its help and co-operation it is practically impossible to bring about any social change, specially when it is of a revolutionary character. If the constructive workers have to attain the *Sarvodaya* ideal rapidly they must influence the political power by their idealism and moral conduct. In this respect Gandhiji himself is the ideal teacher. His non-violence was an active force — a force which commanded by right of service. Imbued with a social purpose and rendered through constructive activities this service must well up from one common realization.

In my last and third article in the series captioned *Congress and Constructive Workers* which were published in the *Harijan* last year before the Sarvodaya Sammelan at Rao, I had said: "Thus the duty of giving political shape to Gandhiji's idea of Loka-Seva-Sangh naturally devolves on the constructive workers because it is they who have received the precious heritage of Gandhiji, viz. his conception of self-less and detached life of service to the people." No doubt the foundation of such a Seva Sangh was laid in the conference at Savagram immediately after the tragic death of Mahatma Gandhi and some more work was done at Rao and afterwards but it must be admitted with regret that the main structure has yet to be raised.

Two years have passed. We are passing through a crucial time. The constructive workers must pool their resources individual and organizational. They must work with a singleness of purpose and the consciousness of the whole. Thus alone will they be able to meet the challenge of the age and thereby create the sanctions for the fulfilment of the ideal of *Sarvodaya.*

SHANKARRAO DEV

WANTED EARTHWORM-BREEDING FARMS

[The following is taken from an article by Edward Hyams in *The New Statesman and Nation* of November 19, 1949, pp. 577-78. V. G. D.]

......The earthworm, if each living kind be considered in its relation to the universe as a whole, is incomparably the most important of animals. Man and the higher animals are parasitic upon this apparently insignificant creature; we owe Hamlet, the Fifth Symphony and St. Paul's Cathedral to its voracious appetite and singleness of purpose. Not only can the earthworm do without man; man is frequently pernicious to its well-being. But man cannot for long do without the earthworm; and if the latter is in its turn dependent upon plants for its subsistence, yet this relationship is one of mutual service rather than parasitism; the worm does as much for the plant as the plant for the worm, whereas man, that is civic man, does nothing for the worms which support him.

In nature of course man makes his contribution; the waste matter of his digestion and the debris of his corpse are excellent worm-fodder which, being consumed by earthworms, are in the guts of those animals converted into a fertile humus for the consumption of plants. But no sooner does man become urbanized than he desists from discharging the most valuable of his products, from a universal point of view, into the earth and sends it through pipes into the sea. While as for his body, which he owes to the plant, and which he has been lent out of the limited stock of terrestrial materials, he has it sealed into a coffin, perhaps even a coffin of lead, or he has it burnt and so fraudulently withholds payment of his debt to the universal community.

......A single pair of worms can give rise to several thousand offspring in the course of twelve months.

Upon hatching out, the young worms .... begin at once upon their business of building fertile soil: burrowing through the earth in every direction, descending to the subsoil to bring up a gutfull of the minerals which have been leached out of the topsoil, climbing into the topsoil to mix this with dead vegetable and animal matter, passing through their bodies everything which comes in their way; the worms discharge either just below or actually upon the surface their casts of finely divided, black, sweet smelling soil, neither acid nor alkaline, whatever may be the reaction of their environment, and so fertile that plants growing in it are from ten to several hundred per cent more productive than plants growing in other soils......

Barring accidents, the earthworm is apparently immortal, certainly very long lived, of a robust and careless constitution and a digestion beyond comparison more efficient than our own. Given the muscular strength of an earthworm, in proportion to his bulk, an average man could shift single-handed a weight of about thirty tons.

......Darwin estimated the English earthworm population at 50,000 per acre. In more favourable conditions this figure may rise to millions, in the Nile Valley for example. Fifty thousand worms deposit in a year more than ten tons of casts, that is they create more than ten tons of perfect top soil upon which the plant, and therefore the animal and human life of the planet subsists. An acre of top soil a foot deep weighs about 1,500 tons. So that in 150 years fifty thousand earthworms will turn barren subsoil and vegetable and animal carrion into an acre of fertile top soil. If the worm population be raised and the available quantity of carrion also, then this term will be shortened accordingly.

Barrest and others have shown that with a suitably rich compost of animal or vegetable matter it is easy to support a worm population at a density of 500 to the cubic foot, which is twenty millions to the foot-acre........But it should be quite possible to maintain 5 million earthworms to the acre of English land by harrowing into that land every kind of waste

organic matter which either agricultural, domestic or industrial activity produces. The consequence would be complete top-soil renewal every eighteen months, or allowing for inactivity on the part of the worms during very cold weather and drought, every three years. Moreover, it would be feasible to give a new and fertile top-soil to regions where none now exists, and thus render every square inch of British surface area productive. Millions a year would be saved in chemical manures of dubious value, soil drainage would be improved, soil erosion and exhaustion checked, and we should soon come near to being able to feed ourselves off our own land.

The United States and Canada already have sources of domesticated earthworms. They are sold to farmers at about a half-penny each and are often purchased by the million. The sooner the Ministry of Agriculture sets up a breeding centre for earthworms and an organization for their proper distribution, the better for our food prospects......

NOTES

Hindi, Out of Order ?

It is reported that the Vice-Chancellor of the Bombay University, after ascertaining the sense of the House, ruled out of order a member's attempt to address the Senate in Hindi, the official language of the Union ! The objectors thought that it would lead to confusion, as others might want to speak in their own tongues. This was irrelevant at the time. The Senator did not want to speak in any language, but in the constitutionally recognized language of the country. Can a member be out of order in doing so ? Let it be noted that President Rajendraprasad has already begun to give his convocation addresses in Hindi.

I hope the ruled-out member will seek another opportunity to get the point thrashed out in a proper form.

16-3-'50 K. G. M.

Dr. Matthai and Gandhiji's Ideals

The following is from *The Times of India*, 10-3-'50 :

> "Dr. Matthai claimed that ever since he joined the Government, he always kept fully before himself the great ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. He refuted the suggestion that in anything he had done or proposed, he had departed 'so much as an inch' from those ideals.
>
> "While denying that Government had neglected agriculture, Dr. Matthai remarked that a modern defence organization of the kind India required could not be built up on 'the economy of the plough and the cow'. It needed large-scale industrial development. He exhorted the House to compromise on pre-independence slogans in order to be able to face up to the 'grim realities' of today."

From What Doctor Matthai is reported to have said it is hard to believe that he has not departed from "the great ideals of Mahatma Gandhi". From what he says later on regarding the "economy of the plough and the cow", industrialization, and "modern defence organization" one may well ask what really, according to the Doctor, are those great ideals from which, he affirms, he has not departed "so much as an inch" !

But there is one thing which all who love Gandhiji's ideals should note from Dr. Matthai's exhortation. Whatever one may say or hear about peace and pacifism or no-war, the world today really worships Moloch, the god of war only, whether it be peace so-called or war. When we are under so-called peace, what we truly live under is not peace, but the blighting shadow of war — feverish preparation for war and destruction. Therefore, the one and only central problem that faces us or rather the whole world is, how to avoid war, how to strive for peace and achieve a really peaceful order.

And was not this the whole ideal of Gandhiji, persisting all along in and through his entire programme, including *Satyagraha* — the moral equivalent of war ? Dr. Matthai was far away from the great ideals of Gandhiji when he ridiculed, or minimized the great importance of the 'economy of the plough and the cow'. If he was as earnest about those ideals as he wanted his hearers to believe he would not be using the language he is reported to have used. Does he not know that without that basic economy which sustains life, and even war, he cannot have industrialization or all that he desires for building up a modern war organization ? It is not a vice but the virtue of the "economy of the plough and the cow" that it does not tend or lend itself to war-mindedness. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that industrialization engenders war, as is evident from recent European history. Let us hope Dr. Matthai works the miracle in India, of being able to bring industrialization and not allow war to follow in its wake !

14-3-'50 MAGANBHAI DESAI

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